

Dr. Brandstetter's Malayo-polynesian Researches: An Appreciation.

There is (or was) in the East, a newspaper claiming to have the largest circulation in Asia, British India excepted. The exception is a big one. If in the same way I were to say that Professor Brandstetter of Lucerne is the soundest and most accurate Malayan scholar in Europe, outside of Holland, I should be merely stating in the fewest words a plain fact which in my judgment, is not as widely known as it deserves to be; and I hope that no one will so far misunderstand my meaning as to imagine that I am attempting to make a scurvy jest at the expense of that learned writer. Under the general title of 'Malayo-Polynesische Forschungen' he has issued a number of very valuable studies on Malayan subjects, whose titles I subjoin in a note for the benefit of all whom it may concern.* There

* *First Series.*

- I. Der Natursinn in den ältern Literaturwerken der Malaien.
- II. Die Beziehungen des Malagasy zum Malayischen.
- III. Die Geschichte des Hang Tuwah, ein älterer Malayischer Sittenroman, ins Deutsche übersetzt.
- IV. Die Geschichte von König Indjilai, eine bugische Erzählung, ins Deutsche übersetzt.
- V. Die Gründung von Wadjo, eine historische Sage aus Südwest Celebes, ins Deutsche übersetzt.
- VI. Das Lehnwort ins Bugischen.

Second Series.

- I. Die Geschichte von Djalalankara, ein Makassarischer Roman, in deutscher Sprache nacherzählt.
- II. Tagalen und Madecassien, eine sprachvergleichende Abhandlung, als Orientierung für Ethnographen und Sprachforscher.
- III. (In preparation) Beiträge zur Fixierung der Stellung welche die Südphilippinischen Idiome innerhalb des Malayo-polynesischen Sprachstammes einnehmen.

is not room here to discuss them all, nor are they all of equal interest to readers in the Malay Peninsula; I will therefore confine myself to those which appeal more particularly to students of Malay.

His two studies on the "relation of Malagasy to Malay" (1893; pp. 43) and on "Tagal and Malagasy" (1902; pp. 85), taken together, give a very clear idea of the interconnection of these languages and throw considerable light on their past history and development.

Brandstetter's strong point is his strictly scientific method. He will not accept conjectural identifications or vague unsupported theories of relationship: he distinguishes most carefully between what he considers to be *proved* and what is merely *probable*. Consequently his results, when they are such as he himself considers certain, may be accepted with a high degree of confidence by his readers.

In choosing two languages so widely separated in geographical distribution as Tagal (or Tagalog) and Malagasy for his points of comparison, he brings out very strikingly the essential unity of the Malayan family of languages, a unity which is evidently due to common descent and not, as Crawford perversely maintained, to the influence of Malay or Javanese modifying a number of originally alien tongues. English students of this subject seem to find a difficulty in getting away from the idea that Malay is the normal type of a Malayan language: that, however, is very far from being the case. From the point of view of phonology, Malay is often relatively very archaic, much nearer to the original sounds, than some of the cognate tongues (e. g. Malagasy and Javanese); but even in this regard Malay is not always the truest representative of the primitive type. Then again Malay lacks many old words which have been preserved in distant and widely separated parts of the Malayo-polynesian region; and this, as van der Tuuk pointed out long ago, is proof enough that they do not owe their common element to Malay. Further, Malay is so much simplified in its grammar that it occupies in the Malayan family much the same relative position, that modern Persian or English occupy among the Indo-European languages: its system of agglutination has been re-

duced to a mere remnant, whereas some of these languages have preserved it in something like its primitive luxuriance. In this respect Tagal and Malagasy are more archaic than Malay. An example will best explain what is meant. The Malay *surat* "writing," is represented in Tagal by *sulat*, in Malagasy by *sóratra* (Malagasy *o* is pronounced *u*).

This verb can be conjugated thus in these two languages:—

ACTIVE.		
	<i>Tagal.</i>	<i>Malagasy.</i>
<i>Present</i>	nanunulat	manoratra
<i>Preterite</i>	nanulat	nanoratra
<i>Future</i>	manunulat	hanoratra
<i>Imperative</i>	manulat	manaráta
PASSIVE.		
	<i>Tagal.</i>	<i>Malagasy</i>
<i>Present</i>	sinusulatan	sorátana
<i>Preterite</i>	sinulatan	nosoratana
<i>Future</i>	susulatan	hosoratana
<i>Imperative</i>	sulatan	soráty*

Here, besides prefixes and suffixes, infixes and reduplication play, in Tagal, a great part.

It is not necessary to add here, by way of contrast, the meagre list of variations which the Malay verb usually assumes: they will be familiar to the reader. Apart from these, there are in Malay (as Dr. Luering pointed out in No. 39 of this Journal) a few scattered survivals which show that the language formerly had a more fully elaborated system of agglutination than it now possesses.

The comparison of some of the words common to Tagal and Malagasy (of which Brandstetter gives a remarkably long and interesting list) shows that in some cases a form more archaic than that of Malay must be inferred as the common original. Thus, for instance, it is practically certain that "fire"

* *y=i*, as in English at the end of a word: Malagasy spelling was invented by English missionaries.

was once *apui* not *api*, and "dead" *matai*, "liver" *hatai*, and so on. But even more interesting, perhaps, is the light which these common words throw on the state of civilization of the primitive ancestors of these tribes before their dispersion. It is clear from the comparative vocabulary that they were quite at home on the tropical seas: they have common words for the sea and the shore, for the crocodile, the prawn, the ray or skate (fish), and the dugong (though the Malagasy *trozona* now means whale, apparently); they had sails for their boats and they used hooks for fishing. Two, at least, of the points of the compass are represented by common words, though their relative directions have shifted and no longer correspond in the different languages. So too for words relating to life on land: they were acquainted with rice, yams, bamboo and, probably, the cocoanut and screw-palm (pandanus); their material civilization comprised acquaintance with iron and, apparently, silver; they had knives and files, and hewed wood into stakes and planks; they had houses with walls and roofs; they had pots, dishes and spoons (or ladles) and mortars with pestles (probably the large ones even now used for pounding rice); and they wore garments of some sort of cloth. They had some simple standards of measurement, notably the fathom (the distance across the outstretched arms). They had words for "month" and "year," and a series of numerals to 1000, inclusive. Words relating to the transactions of life in a social community are also not altogether absent; buying and borrowing, debt and payment, are ideas which appear to have been familiar to them; and they are not without words which indicate differences of social rank, e. g. the existence of chiefs to whom personal respect was due. The widespread institution of the "taboo" appears to have already existed among them in those early days.

This is by no means an exhaustive account of the condition of these people: I have merely picked out a few of the salient facts embodied in Brandstetter's list of words, and these it must be remembered are drawn from Tagal and Malagasy only. If the other Malayan languages (whose name is legion) were taken into account, many additional details could be added to this outline sketch: it is enough, however, to show that such

researches as these may lead to very interesting discoveries, quite apart from the merely technical details of philology.

These last I shall not pretend to deal with here, only referring the reader to these two valuable monographs, where he will find them set out and very skilfully handled.

I have left myself little space to notice the other numbers of the series to which I would draw particular attention. Of the Hikayat Hang Tuah I will merely say that it is an historical romance of the life of the well-known Malacca hero, and that while it is probably of no great value from the point of view of history strictly so called, it is a highly interesting picture of Malay life and manners and by no means deserves the unmixed contempt which Crawford thought fit to pour upon it. It dates probably from the early part of the 17th century and is a recognized specimen of the best type of Malay classical prose literature.

The only other of Brandstetters' works which I propose to mention here is his essay on the Malay appreciation of the beauties of nature (and their aesthetic sense in general) as evidenced in their literature. Here he lays a good deal of Malay prose and poetry under contribution and by a number of well selected examples reveals a side of the Malay character which is not, I think, in their every day life at least, very obvious to the ordinary observer. He has confined himself to literary works older than the 19th century, to the exclusion of all modern productions, and perhaps therefore European influence may be discounted: the question of the imitation of India models is more difficult, but on the whole Brandstetter is disposed to regard the mental attitude which he illustrates as being really original to the Malay mind, and he has not to take his examples from works, like the *Sri Rama*, which are avowedly based on Indian originals. Even in these, however, it may be remarked that the local colouring is distinctly Malay; and one need only look, for instance, at the beautiful passage quoted and translated by Maxwell on pp. 89 and 90 of No. 17 of this Journal, to be convinced that the Malay rhapsodist from whom Maxwell derived his version of the story has not servilely copied any Indian model but has given the rein to his own fancy and freely exercised his own descriptive power.

It is impossible to go into details here, but I hope that the indications I have given will induce some of the readers of this Journal to refer both to Brandstetter's essay and to his Malay originals. Victor Hugo did not disdain to translate Malay pantuns: a poet himself, he could appreciate the poetry which many of them so quaintly embody, and I venture to think that an anthology could be made up out of Malay literature which would be worthy to rank with many other such collections in better known languages. Unfortunately the Malay genius does not lend itself to sustained effort: it rises here and there to real heights of poetic fancy, but taken as a whole it is undoubtedly pedestrian. All the more reason, therefore, is there for picking out the gems which lie hidden amongst so much that is little better than dross.

This short notice can hardly do justice to the excellence of Brandstetter's work: I can say no more, in summing up, than that that he is a worthy pupil of the Dutch School, and that in attempting to carry on the work of Malayan research beyond the confines of Holland and Netherlands India, he is setting an example which may well be followed elsewhere. It is unfortunate that the work of Dutch scholars in this line of study is so little known to English readers. The initial difficulties are not nearly as great as they are supposed to be: one can easily pick up enough understanding of the Dutch written language to be able to read intelligently a Dutch essay on a Malayan subject. However, as Englishmen, persistently and very much to their own disadvantage, continue to ignore the Dutch authorities, perhaps it may be some help to such of them as have a fair knowledge of German to have Brandstetter's work to refer to. His work, however, is purely original, though he has been trained in the Dutch school and would be the first to acknowledge his indebtedness to it, as indeed he repeatedly does; and when one says that he is making for himself a place in the list of distinguished Malayan scholars which holds such names as van der Tuuk, Kern, Niemann and Brandes, one need, I think, say no more.

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